

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Certain bits of a packet, such as bits in the IP header of an IP packet, are used to designate the type of service or Quality of Service (QoS) level to be afforded to the

5 packet as it passes through a data communications network. A user entitled to a certain QoS level logs into a service selection gateway SSG. The SSG queries an authentication, authorization and accounting (AAA) server in response to a log-in attempt by the user.

Upon authorization, the AAA server returns an access accept signal in addition to an indication from the user's service profile (user profile) as to the QoS level to be afforded

10 the user. While the user is logged in, all packets are routed through the SSG. The SSG sets the certain bits of the packet in accordance with the user's assigned QoS level so that as the packets are routed through the data communications network, they are consistently afforded the assigned Quality of Service level. In another aspect of the invention, on-demand QoS may be provided by the SSG and accounted for by communications with the

15 AAA server.